

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1692

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJECT: PRAVDA DEFENDS INDIRA

1. SUMMARY. THE SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS HAS REPORTED THE DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA OF THE PAST FEW DAYS IN A MANNER WHICH TRACKS WITH MOSCOW'S FIRM SUPPORT FOR PM GHANDI. THE DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY IS PORTRAYED AS A RESPONSE TO "RIGHTIST" THREATS OF CIVIL DISORDER. TWO SIGNED COMMENTARIES HAVE, HOWEVER, ALSO GIVEN SOME OF THE FACTS BEHIND THE PRESENT CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRAVDA (JUNE 27, 28) CARRIES SEVERAL TASS ITEMS FROM DELHI REPORTING THE DECLARATION OF EXTRAORDINARY POWERS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, THE ARREST AND "PREVENTIVE DETENTIONS" OF "REACTIONARIES," EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE, AND EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR INDIRA'S MOVE FROM INDIAN LEADERS. TASS ALSO REPROTS A CPI STATEMENT BLAMING INDIA'S PROBLEMS ON DOMESTIC "REACTIONARIES" AND ON THE ALLEGED

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"THREAT" FROM THE US.

3. A COMMENTARY BY REGULAR POLITICAL OBSERVER IVAN SHCHEDROV IN PRAVDA JUNE 27 DESCRIBES EVENTS IN INDIA AS A "COMPLICATION IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SITUATION" WHICH DEMONSTRATES THAT THE "STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE FORCES OF DEMOCRACY AND THOSE OF REACTION IS TAKING ON SHARPER FORMS." SHCHEDROV REVIEWS THE MAIN POINTS OF THE ALLAHABAD COURT CASE, INCLUDING THE CHARGES AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER OF ELECTION LAW VIOLATIONS AND THE PENALTIES WHICH THE LAW PRESCRIBES. BUT THE COMMENTARY AVOIDS ANY CRITICISM OF THE PM, AND DEVOTES MOST OF ITS ATTENTION TO THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SUPPORT SHE HAS RECEIVED, INCLUDING THE MASS DEMONSTRATIONS "IN MANY CITIES" AS WELL AS THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE INDIRA RECEIVED FROM HER OWN PARTY LEADERS. SHCHEDROV SHARPLY CRITIZED THE "NOISY CAMPAIGN" EMPLOYED BY INDIRA'S "REACTIONARY" OPPONENTS, AND HE CLAIMS THEY ARE INCITING THE POPULATION, ARMY, AND POLICE NOT TO FOLLOW GOVERNMENT ORDERS. FOR THESE REASONS, ACCORDING TO SHCHEDROV, THERE EXISTS A REAL THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM PROGRAMS, AND THE PRESIDENT'S DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY IS AIMED AT PROTECTING THE ADMINISTRATION'S ACHIEVEMENTS.

4. IZVESTIYA'S COMMENTATOR I. KOVALYEV, IN THE JUNE 27 ISSUE, FOLLOWS THE SAME GENERAL LINE, ADDING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF "TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS." KOVALYEV ALSO PLAYS UP THE ALLEGED THREAT TO DOMESTIC ORDER BY THE OPPOSITION AND SAYS THAT THE "COORDINATOR" OF THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, J.P. NARAYAN, WAS AMONG THOSE ARRESTED.

5. COMMENT: UP TO NOW, SOVIET MEDIA HAVE DEALT VAGUELY AND INDIRECTLY WITH THE ISSUE OF MRS. GHANDHI'S TRIAL AND CONVICTION. SHCHEDROV'S AND KOVALYEV'S COMMENTARIES ARE THE FIRST ITEMS TO DEAL WITH THEM IN ANY DETAIL. BUT THESE COMMENTARIES, LIKE THE RELATED "NEWS" COVERAGE, TREAT IT NOT AS AN ISSUE IN ITSELF BUT AS PART OF AN ALLEGED CAMPAIGN BY "REACTIONARY" FORCES IN INDIA WHO SEEK TO DISCREDIT THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER REFORM-MINDED GOVERNMENT. THE COMMENTARIES DO NOT PICK UP THE CPI LINE ABOUT US MACHINATIONS. THUS SOVIET MEDIA REMAIN PREDICTABLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMITTED TO INDIRA. BUT MOSCOW NO DOUBT IS WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN DELHI WITH ACUTE CONCERN, AND DESPITE THE OBVIOUS BIAS OF THESE REPORTS AND COMMENTS, THE SOVIET READER HAS NOW BEEN GIVEN SOME OF THE CRUCIAL FACTS, IN NOTABLE CONTRAST TO SOVIET COVERAGE OF WATERGATE. STOESEL

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